General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 June 2007

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 114

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*without reference to a Main Committee (A/61/L.56 and Add.1)*]

61/266. Multilingualism

The General Assembly,

Recognizing that the United Nations pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally,

Recognizing also that genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding, and recognizing the importance of the capacity to communicate to the peoples of the world in their own languages, including in formats accessible to persons with disabilities,

Stressing the need for strict observance of the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the different bodies and organs of the United Nations,

Recalling its resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, by which it adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,[1] in particular article 27 thereof, concerning the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities,

Recalling also its resolutions 2 (I) of 1 February 1946, 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 42/207 C of 11 December 1987, 50/11 of 2 November 1995, 52/23 of 25 November 1997, 54/64 of 6 December 1999, 56/262 of 15 February 2002, 59/309 of 22 June 2005, 61/121 B of 14 December 2006 and 61/236 and 61/244 of 22 December 2006,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General[2] and the letter dated 26 February 2007 from the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to the Secretary-General on the proclamation of 2008 as International Year of Languages,[3]

[1] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.
[2] A/61/317.
[3] A/61/780, annex.

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General[2] and the letter dated 26 February 2007 from the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to the Secretary-General;[3]

2. *Emphasizes* the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations;

3. *Underlines* the need for full implementation of the resolutions establishing language arrangements for the official languages of the United Nations and the working languages of the Secretariat;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of those services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages and taking into account their respective workloads;

5. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to complete the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents onto the United Nations website in all six official languages on a priority basis, so that those archives are also available to Member States through that medium;

6. *Reiterates* that all content-providing offices in the Secretariat should continue their efforts to translate into all official languages all English-language materials and databases posted on the United Nations website in the most practical, efficient and cost-effective manner;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to ensure, through the provision of documentation services and meeting and publishing services under conference management, including high-quality translation and interpretation, effective multilingual communication among representatives of Member States in intergovernmental organs and members of expert bodies of the United Nations equally in all the official languages of the United Nations;

8. *Stresses* the importance of providing United Nations information, technical assistance and training materials, whenever possible, in the local languages of the beneficiary countries;

9. *Recalls* its resolution 61/236, in which it reaffirmed the provisions relating to conference services of its resolutions on multilingualism;

10. *Also recalls* its resolution 61/121 B, and emphasizes the importance of multilingualism in United Nations public relations and information activities;

11. *Notes with satisfaction* the willingness of the Secretariat to encourage staff members, in meetings with interpretation services, to use any of the six official languages of which they have a command;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to appoint a new Coordinator for Multilingualism, and takes note of the proposal contained in the report of the Secretary-General regarding the informal network of focal points to support the Coordinator;

13. *Emphasizes* the importance of:

(*a*) Making appropriate use of all the official languages of the United Nations in all the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, with the aim of eliminating the disparity between the use of English and the use of the five other official languages;

(*b*) Ensuring the full and equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all the activities of the Department of Public Information;

and, in this regard, reaffirms its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department has appropriate staffing capacity in all the official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

14. *Reaffirms* the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on United Nations websites, and in this regard:

(*a*) Encourages the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to develop multilingual United Nations websites;

(*b*) Reaffirms that the United Nations website is an essential tool for the media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, Member States and the general public, and reiterates the continued need for efforts by the Department of Public Information to maintain and improve it;

(*c*) Reaffirms its request to the Secretary-General to ensure, while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate website, the adequate distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations website among all official languages, taking into consideration the specificity of each official language on a continuous basis;

(*d*) Notes that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations website has improved, although at a slower rate than expected owing to constraints that need to be addressed;

(*e*) Requests the Department of Public Information, in coordination with content-providing offices, to improve the actions taken to achieve parity among the six official languages on the United Nations website, in particular by expediting the filling of current vacant posts in some sections;

(*f*) Recognizes that some official languages use non-Latin and bidirectional scripts and that technological infrastructures and supportive applications in the United Nations are based on Latin script, which leads to difficulties in processing non-Latin and bidirectional scripts, and requests the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management of the Secretariat, to continue its efforts to ensure that technological infrastructures and supportive applications in the United Nations fully support Latin, non-Latin and bidirectional scripts in order to enhance the equality of all official languages on the United Nations website;

15. *Welcomes* the cooperative arrangements undertaken by the Department of Public Information with academic institutions to increase the number of web pages available in some official languages, and requests the Secretary-General to explore additional cost-neutral ways to further extend these cooperative arrangements, in coordination with content-providing offices, so as to include all the official languages of the United Nations, bearing in mind the necessity of adherence to United Nations standards and guidelines;

16. *Notes with satisfaction* the official launch of iSeek in Geneva in the two working languages of the Secretariat, and encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts to implement iSeek at all duty stations as well as to develop and implement cost-neutral measures to provide Member States with secure access to the information currently accessible only on the Intranet of the Secretariat;

17. *Notes with appreciation* the work carried out by the United Nations information centres, including the United Nations Regional Information Centre, in favour of the publication of United Nations information materials and the translation of important documents into languages other than the official languages of the United Nations, with a view to reaching the widest possible audience and extending the United Nations message to all corners of the world in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization; and encourages United Nations information centres to continue their multilingual activities in the interactive and proactive aspects of their work, especially by arranging seminars and debates to further the spread of information and the understanding and exchange of views regarding United Nations activity at the local level;

18. *Recalls* its resolution 61/244, in which it reaffirmed the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat, reaffirmed the use of additional working languages in specific duty stations as mandated, and in that regard requested the Secretary-General to ensure that vacancy announcements specified the need for either of the working languages of the Secretariat, unless the functions of the post required a specific working language;

19. *Also recalls* paragraph 17 of section II of its resolution 61/244, in which it acknowledged that the interaction of the United Nations with the local population in the field was essential and that language skills constituted an important element of the selection and training processes, and therefore affirmed that a good command of the official language(s) spoken in the country of residence should be taken into account as an additional asset during those processes;

20. *Stresses* that the employment of staff shall continue to be carried out in strict accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and in line with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions;

21. *Also stresses* that the promotion of staff in the Professional and higher categories should be carried out in strict accordance with Article 101 of the Charter and in line with the provisions of resolution 2480 B (XXIII) and the relevant provisions of resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001;

22. *Encourages* United Nations staff members to continue to use actively existing training facilities to acquire and enhance their proficiency in one or more of the official languages of the United Nations;

23. *Recalls* that linguistic diversity is an important element of cultural diversity, and takes note of the entry into force on 18 March 2007 of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;[4]

24. *Welcomes* the decision taken by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 17 November 1999 that 21 February should be proclaimed International Mother Language Day, and calls upon Member States and the Secretariat to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world;

25. *Proclaims* 2008 International Year of Languages, pursuant to the resolution adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its thirty-third session on 20 October 2005,[5]

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[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-third Session, Paris, 3–21 October 2005*, vol.1 and corrigenda: *Resolutions*, chap. V, resolution 41.

[5] Ibid., resolution 51; see also A/61/780, enclosure.

invites the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to serve as the lead agency for the Year, and in this context:

(*a*) Invites Member States, the United Nations system and all other relevant stakeholders to develop, support and intensify activities aimed at fostering respect for and the promotion and protection of all languages, in particular endangered languages, linguistic diversity and multilingualism;

(*b*) Invites the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the impact of the activities carried out during the Year;

26. *Reaffirms* its resolution 61/185 of 20 December 2006 concerning the proclamation of international years, in which it stressed the need to take into account and apply the criteria and procedures contained in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries in considering future proposals for international years;

27. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session a comprehensive report on the full implementation of its resolutions on multilingualism;

28. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-third session the item entitled "Multilingualism".

96th plenary meeting
16 May 2007